Navy Opens New Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence; Announces New Regional Training Center in Danville, Va.

DANVILLE, Va. – On Oct. 5, the U.S. Navy celebrated the formal opening of its Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence (AM CoE) within the State of Virginia's Center for Manufacturing Advancement (CMA) on the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) campus in Danville, Virginia, Team Submarine Public Affairs said in an Oct. 6 release.

The AM CoE is co-located with IALR's Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM) Program, which is a joint U.S. Navy-Office of the Secretary of Defense Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment effort that provides a fast track, intensive, and targeted curriculum across key trades, including welding, machining, metrology, and additive manufacturing.

The new AM CoE will include three full bays dedicated to accelerating and scaling additive manufacturing, activating the supply chain through a centralized Navy demand signal, and serving as an operational hub that builds upon experience and collaboration across a consortium of industry and academic experts.

The official ribbon-cutting ceremony took place during the Second Annual ATDM Summit, which brought together U.S. Navy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, federal, state and local government officials, as well as defense, industry and academic partners, to discuss the importance of creating a

ready and capable workforce and sustaining robust trade pipelines and strong industry partnerships to close the trade and manpower gaps impacting the defense industry.

Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin kicked off the Summit in front of a crowd of 300 people.

“We are honored to be partnered with the Navy. This partnership will diversify, transform and grow Southern Virginia’s production capability for the Submarine Industrial Base as well, marking another major win for Virginia’s defense economy and labor market,” Youngkin said.

During live, virtual remarks, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro addressed the imperative for programs like ATDM.

“To strengthen our maritime dominance, we have to field and maintain the right capabilities to deter adversaries and, when called upon, to win wars,” Del Toro said. “Graduates of the ATDM Program will enter the workforce with the specific skills and nationally recognized certifications we need now, with true, hands-on experience through facilities like the new Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence.”

Vice Adm. William Galinis, commander, Naval Sea Systems (NAVSEA), provided his perspective on the efforts happening in Danville and how they are poised to support the broader Navy enterprise.

“This is an ‘All Hands on Deck’ endeavor, and ensuring we have a ready and capable workforce is at the top of the list in things we must get right,” he said.

“The creation of the AM CoE marks the first major partnership for the CMA, and demonstrates the Navy’s commitment to investing in – and delivering – the skilled workforce necessary to strengthen and expand the Navy’s industrial base to achieve the Nation’s strategic defense objectives,” said Matthew Sermon, the executive director of Program Executive

Office, Strategic Submarines (PEO SSBN).

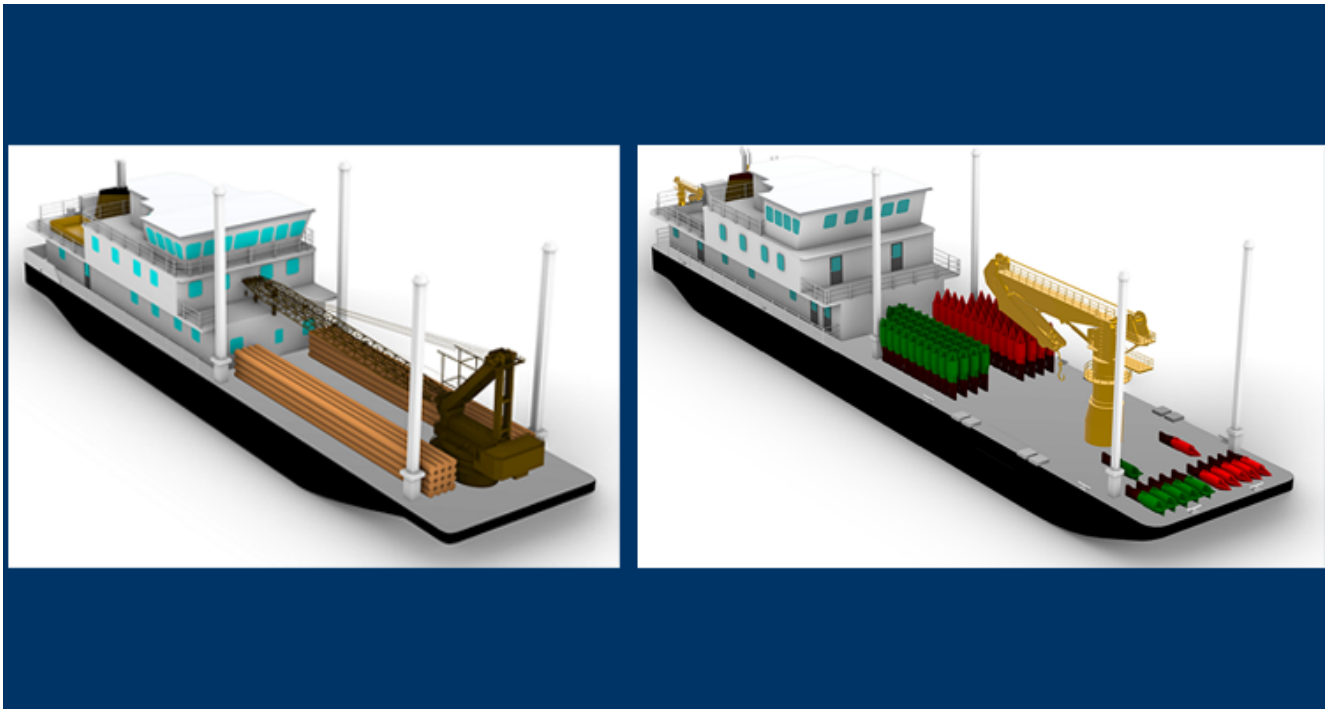
“Building and sustaining the Navy’s defense industrial base workforce, and smartly but aggressively pushing the bounds of advanced technology adoption, has become a national security imperative and is part of the whole-of-government/whole-of-industry approach,” Sermon continued. “This facility, and the partnerships it is built upon, will pave a path for sustainable and scalable additive manufacturing production capability in the submarine industrial base, and across the Navy-industry community.”

PEO SSBN’s Rear Adm. Scott Pappano cut the ceremonial ribbon, and also announced plans for key investments into dedicated infrastructure, capability, and capacity designed to scale the current ATDM program through a Regional Training Center, which will sit adjacent to the AM CoE and will have the capacity to train approximately 1000 defense manufacturing workforce members each year.

“ATDM serves as a national model for how we meet the demand for industrial base workforce over the coming years,” Pappano said. “As we look to our greatest threats and risk, we must make bold moves…that’s exactly what we are doing here in Danville. The events we celebrate today – centered on workforce, technology, and the space where those two priorities must meet – are game changing for our enterprise.”

U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, U.S. Rep. Bob Good, and U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary for Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) James D. Rodriguez were among the distinguished guests who provided their overwhelming support for both the workforce and technology efforts happening as part of the region’s partnership with the Navy.

Coast Guard Awards Birdon America Inc. to Design, Build River Buoy, Inland Construction Tenders



Artist’s rendering of the Inland Construction Tender (left) and River Buoy Tender. *U.S. COAST GUARD*

WASHINGTON — On Oct. 5, 2022, the Coast Guard Waterways Commerce Cutter (WCC) Program awarded Birdon America, Inc. of Denver, Colorado, an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity firm fixed price contract with economic price adjustments for the detail design and construction of its river buoy and inland construction tenders.

The initial award is worth $28.49 million. The contract includes options for the construction of a total of 16 river buoy tenders and 11 inland construction tenders.

If all contract line items are exercised, the total contract value is estimated at $1.19 billion.

River buoy tenders service short-range aids to navigation (ATON) on the western rivers. They set, relocate and recover buoys to mark the navigable channel in the rivers as the water level changes and also establish and maintain fixed aids, lights and day beacons.

Inland construction tenders construct, repair and maintain fixed ATON within inland waterways along the Eastern Seaboard and Gulf of Mexico. They are the only Coast Guard platform with the capability to drive and remove piles, erect towers and effect major structural changes.

The Coast Guard has a statutory mission to develop, establish and maintain maritime ATON. WCCs will perform a critical part of this mission on the inland waterways and western rivers. The WCCs will replace the legacy inland tender fleet, which has an average vessel age of over 57 years and includes ships still in service at 78 years old. This contract award ensures the Coast Guard will continue to meet its vital missions throughout the Marine Transportation System.

“This contract award is an important milestone for the new inland fleet that will improve our operational capability on the Western Rivers, and Inland Waterways” said Adm. Linda Fagan, commandant, U.S. Coast Guard.

The new WCCs will have greater endurance, speed and deck load capacity than their predecessors. The ships will also feature improved habitability and will accommodate mixed-gender crews.

Stage 2 of the Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Cutter Moves Forward

Artist's rendition of a Stage 1 Offshore Patrol Cutter. *LEONARDO DRS*

WASHINGTON – The Coast Guard today issued a notice to Austal USA, the offshore patrol cutter (OPC) Stage 2 contractor, to proceed on detail design work to support future production of OPCs, Coast Guard Headquarters said in a release. The Coast Guard issued the notice following the withdrawal of an award protest filed in July with the Government Accountability Office by an unsuccessful Stage 2 offeror.

The Coast Guard on June 30, 2022, awarded a fixed-price incentive (firm target) contract through a full and open competition to Austal USA to produce up to 11 offshore patrol cutters. The initial award is valued at $208.26 million and supports detail design and long lead-time material for the fifth OPC, with options for production of up to 11 OPCs in total. The contract has a potential value of up to $3.33

billion if all options are exercised.

The Coast Guard’s requirements for OPC Stage 2 detail design and production were developed to maintain commonality with earlier OPCs in critical areas such as the hull and propulsion systems, but provide flexibility to propose and implement new design elements that benefit lifecycle cost, production and operational efficiency and performance.

The 25-ship OPC program of record complements the capabilities of the service’s national security cutters, fast response cutters and polar security cutters as an essential element of the Department of Homeland Security’s layered maritime security strategy. The OPC will meet the service’s long-term need for cutters capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups and is essential to stopping smugglers at sea, interdicting undocumented non-citizens, rescuing mariners, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to disasters and protecting ports.

Navy Approves Northrop Grumman’s New Navigation Capability for Fleet Deployment

Sailors stand watch on the bridge aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Roosevelt (DDG 80) as the ship conducts a replenishment-at-sea with the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS William McLean (T-AKE 12), Oct. 1, 2022. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Danielle Baker*

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.— The U.S. Navy has approved Northrop Grumman Corporation's new Electronic Chart Display and Information System (Navy ECDIS) for deployment to its fleet, the company said in an Oct. 5 release.

The Navy's Operational Test and Evaluation Force (OPTEVFOR) issued a formal determination that Navy ECDIS is "operationally suitable, operationally effective and cyber survivable." This new capability will be a core element to all U.S. Navy bridge and navigation systems.

Navy ECDIS processes and displays multiple chart formats including digital nautical charts developed by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. The system tracks targets from the vessel's navigation radar, enabling creation of route plans, automation of plan execution and monitoring progress

along the route. Safety checking functions analyze chart data and radar targets to warn of hazards to safe navigation while underway.

“Our agile approach to developing Navy ECDIS enabled software to be developed in sprints, with customer input at every step of the way,” said Todd Leavitt, vice president, naval and oceanic systems, Northrop Grumman. “This workflow allowed the Navy to see and evaluate results of their input as they came up and saved them both time and money.”

Navy ECDIS will provide the next generation of navigation capabilities to the fleet including compliance with the standard for mission interoperability with NATO allies, implementing cybersecurity requirements as well as enhancements to the human machine interface to simplify operation, improve situational awareness and increase the safety of navigation.

OPTEVFOR’s approval of Navy ECDIS is the culmination of nearly a year of rigorous government testing. The test and approval process began with sea trials on the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) and continued with evaluation activities at Naval Surface Warfare Center, Philadelphia Division (NSWCPD).

The Navy has directed the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) to be the first ship in the fleet to receive Navy ECDIS. NSWCPD will perform the installation this October. The Navy plans to install the system on 115 ships in the next three years, demonstrating the power of scalability of software defined systems such as Navy ECDIS.

Northrop Grumman developed and fielded the Navy’s current ECDIS software, Voyage Management System, which has since become a core element of the bridge and navigation system on every U.S. Navy ship and submarine. Northrop Grumman’s broad range of navigation systems provides precise, survivable,

secure, resilient and agile solutions for sea, land, air and space.

Keel Authenticated for the Future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek

The keel for the future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek (T-ATS

8) was ceremonially laid at Bollinger Houma Shipyards in Houma, LA, Oct. 3. *Bollinger Houma Shipyards*

WASHINGTON – The keel for the future USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek (T-ATS 8) was ceremonially laid at Bollinger Houma Shipyards, Oct. 3, Team Ships Public Affairs said in an Oct. 5 release.

Named for the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, the ship honors the original people of modern-day Michigan and their proud tradition of service to their country. Ojibwe is also referred to as Chippewa and Anishinabek means "original people." The keel authenticator was the Honorable Theresa Peters Jackson, Chief of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe.

"This is an awesome Navy day as we gather to celebrate this multi-mission platform and the range of capabilities it will bring to the fleet, including towing, salvage, rescue, oil spill response and humanitarian assistance," said Rear Adm. Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer, Ships. "It is an honor to be joined by members of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe as the keel is authenticated for their namesake ship and we are excited to honor their heritage and commitment to service of country."

The Navajo class (T-ATS) provides ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support fleet operations. T-ATS replaces and fulfills the capabilities that were previously provided by the Fleet Ocean Tug (T-ATF 166) and Rescue and Salvage Ships (T-ARS 50) class ships.

In addition to T-ATS 8, Bollinger is constructing USNS Navajo (T-ATS 6) and USNS Cherokee Nation (T-ATS 7) and is under contract for USNS Lenni Lenape (T-ATS 9) and USNS Muscogee Creek Nation (T-ATS 10).

Keel Authenticated for Pathfinder-Class T-AGS 67

The keel of the next oceanographic survey ship (T-AGS 67) was ceremonially laid at Halter Marine in Pascagoula, MS, Oct. 4. Here, Halter Marine welders etch names and the hull number into the keel plate. *Halter Marine*

WASHINGTON – The keel for the Navy's next oceanographic survey ship (T-AGS 67) was ceremonially laid at Halter Marine in Pascagoula, MS, Oct. 4, Team Ships Public Affairs said in an Oct. 5 release. The keel authenticator was Rear Adm. Tom Anderson, Program Executive Officer, Ships.

"This is an awesome Navy day as we gather to celebrate the start of construction of the eighth ship in the Pathfinder class," Anderson said. "We look forward to delivering another ship that provides significant capability in undersea warfare and charting the world's coastlines."

Equipped with a moon pool for unmanned vehicle deployment and

retrieval, T-AGS 67 will be a multi-mission ship that will perform acoustic, biological, physical and geophysical surveys, providing much of the U.S. military's information on the ocean environment. The vessel will be more than 350 feet in length with an overall beam of 58 feet.

T-AGS 67 will be operated by the Military Sealift Command (MSC). MSC consists of non-combatant, civilian crewed ships that replenish U.S. Navy ships, chart ocean bottoms, conduct undersea surveillance, tactically preposition combat cargo at sea and move military equipment and supplies used by deployed U.S. forces around the world.

USS Porter Completes Service with Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) departs Naval Station Rota, Spain, to begin its homeport shift to Norfolk, Virginia, Sept. 28, 2022. *U.S NAVY*

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain – The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) departed Naval Station Rota, Spain, on Sept. 28, 2022, marking the end of its time as a Forward Deployed Naval Forces-Europe (FDNF-E) destroyer, said Lt. j.g. Anna M. Kukelhan of Commander, Naval Forces Europe/Africa, in an Oct. 5 release.

Porter has been stationed in Rota, Spain for seven years, initially joining USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) and USS Ross (DDG 71) on April 30, 2015 as the third FDNF-E destroyer assigned to Destroyer Squadron 60 and Commander, Task Force (CTF) 65, which operates under command and control of U.S. Sixth Fleet in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations.

“Porter’s time in Sixth Fleet was an invaluable experience for all. The crew and I depart Rota, Spain at the highest state of

readiness thanks to the many operations and exercises conducted with our NATO allies and partners," said Cmdr. Christopher Petro, Porter's commanding officer. "We are extremely grateful for personal and professional development provided by the opportunities and challenges encountered as a member of Forward Deployed Naval Forces Europe."

Porter conducted 11 patrols in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, finishing her most recent patrol in July 2022. Throughout these patrols, Porter sailed through the Mediterranean Sea, Baltic Sea, Black Sea and High North. The ship has also crossed the Atlantic three times, building interoperability with NATO allies and partners throughout the region.

Porter worked with the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and the French Charles de Gaulle Carrier Strike Groups, although most of its time underway was independently deployed. Porter's patrols focused on a wide variety of mission areas, including surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, anti-air warfare and strike warfare, dedicated to ensuring interoperability with U.S. allies and offering a stable presence in the region.

During its seven years with the FDNF-E force, Porter participated in many joint operations with allies and other branches of service. Some of the notable exercises the ship participated in include FOST, BALTOPS, Atlas Handshake, Joint Warrior, Sea Breeze, Polaris and Atlantic Resolve.

In April 2017, Porter launched 59 Tomahawk missiles into Al-Shayrat Air Base, Syria, in coordination with USS Ross (DDG 71), in response to the Syrian government's chemical attacks on civilians during the Syrian civil war.

Porter will be replaced on the FDNF-E force by USS Bulkeley (DDG 84), the latest destroyer to arrive to Rota, Spain. USS Bulkeley was commissioned in December of 2001, and is named

for Vice Admiral John D. Bulkeley.

With Porter's departure, all four ships originally assigned to CTF 65 have been replaced. With all homeport shifts now completed, the new FDNF-E ships are the USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51), USS Roosevelt (DDG 80), USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117) and the USS Bulkeley (DDG 84). The new members of the FDNF-E force will continue the exemplary work accomplished by the first assigned destroyers, including Porter.

"Throughout her seven years patrolling Sixth Fleet, Porter Sailors consistently demonstrated our capabilities and integration with joint and combined forces. I am extremely proud of the work USS Porter accomplished here and how we have furthered our alliances and partnerships," said Cmdr. Joseph Hamilton, Porter's executive officer, "It has been a privilege to serve at the forefront of critical operations in the FDNF-E environment, and I am humbled to have served with the best crew in the Navy."

Porter is named for Commodore David Porter, and his son, Adm. David Dixon Porter, and is the fifth ship to bear his name. Commodore David Porter served in the Quasi War, First Barbary War, War of 1812 and in the West Indies. He took command of numerous ships, including the USS Constitution. He is known for first originating the saying, "Free Trade and Sailors Rights."

Adm. David Dixon Porter was the second U.S. Navy Officer to achieve the rank of Admiral, largely due to his service during the Civil War, where he played a vital role in the Battle of New Orleans and the Battle of Vicksburg. He also led the assault on Fort Fischer, the final significant naval contribution of the war. His service began with his time in the Mexican-American War and ended with his tenure as Superintendent of the Naval Academy, where he enacted a significant series of reforms, laying the groundwork for their current mission.

USS Porter is scheduled to return to its former homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, and will now continue to serve through an assignment to Destroyer Squadron 22.

Four U.S. Navy destroyers are based in Rota, Spain and are assigned to Commander, Task Force 65 in support of NATO's Integrated Air Missile Defense architecture. These FDNF-E ships have the flexibility to operate throughout the waters of Europe and Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Arctic Circle, demonstrating their mastery of the maritime domain.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy Reaches the North Pole

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) cuts a channel through the multi-year pack ice and snow as Healy transits the Arctic Ocean to the North Pole, Sept. 27, 2022. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Deborah Heldt Cordone, Auxiliary Public Affairs Specialist 1*

NORTH POLE – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy (WAGB 20) reached the North Pole Friday after traversing the frozen Arctic Ocean, marking only the second time a U.S. ship has reached the location unaccompanied, the first being Healy in 2015, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in an Oct. 4 release.

Healy, a medium icebreaker, and crew departed Dutch Harbor, Alaska, Sept. 4, beginning its journey to reach latitude 90 degrees north. The cutter and crew supported oceanographic research in collaboration with National Science Foundation-funded scientists throughout their transit to the North Pole.

This is the third time Healy's traveled to the North Pole since its commissioning in 1999.

"The crew of Healy is proud to reach the North Pole," said Capt. Kenneth Boda, commanding officer of the Healy. "This rare opportunity is a highlight of our Coast Guard careers. We are honored to demonstrate Arctic operational capability and facilitate the study of this strategically important and rapidly changing region."

Healy is currently on a months-long, multi-mission deployment to conduct oceanographic research at the furthest reaches of the northern latitudes. The 420-foot icebreaker is the largest ship in the Coast Guard and is capable of breaking through four-and-half feet of ice at a continuous speed of three knots.

Healy, which departed its Seattle homeport on July 11, currently has thirty-four scientists and technicians from multiple universities and institutions aboard, and nearly 100 active duty crew members.

During the cutter's first Arctic leg of the patrol throughout July and August, Healy traveled into the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, going as far north as 78 degrees. As a part of the

Office of Naval Research’s Arctic Mobile Observing System program, Healy deployed underwater sensors, sea gliders and acoustic buoys to study Arctic hydrodynamics in the marginal and pack ice zones.

In addition to enabling Arctic science, Healy also supported U.S. national security objectives for the Arctic region by projecting a persistent ice-capable U.S. presence in U.S. Arctic waters, and patrolling our maritime border with Russia.

On its second Arctic mission of the summer, while transiting to the North Pole, Healy embarked a team of researchers as a part of the Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS). SAS is an international collaborative research program focused on using specially equipped research vessels from around the world to gather data throughout the Arctic across multiple scientific disciplines. Dr. Carin Ashjian, from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, is currently serving alongside Dr. Jackie Grebmeier as co-chief Scientists onboard Healy with support from the National Science Foundation.

Gerald R. Ford Deploys After One-Day Weather Delay

The Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) departs Naval Station Norfolk, Oct. 4. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Anderson W. Branch*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The lead ship U.S. Navy's newest class of nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, USS Gerald Ford (CVN 78), delayed a day for weather, departed Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, Oct. 4 on its first major deployment.

"This afternoon the Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) set out on deployment," said Lt. Danielle Moser, deputy public affairs officer for Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, in an Oct. 4 release.

The Ford is making what the Navy calls a "service-retained" deployment, meaning it is operating by the authority of the chief of naval operations under command and control of the U.S. 2nd Fleet, rather than under the command and control of a regional combatant commander under the Global Force Management Concept.

Vice Adm. Daniel Dwyer, commander of the U.S. 2nd Fleet, said

Carrier Strike Group 12 (CSG 12), of which the Ford is a part, will range throughout the Atlantic Ocean operating with navies of allied and partner nations.

Dwyer, speaking to reporters Sept. 26, said the deployment would provide the Ford CSG commander "a chance to test the carrier's air operability prior to embarking on its first Global Force Management deployment next year. This historic service-retained deployment is an opportunity for the U.S. Navy to come together with other members of the NATO Alliance to exercise and train together within the Atlantic and its littorals while testing out advanced technologies on the first new class of U.S. aircraft carrier in more than 40 years."

CSG-12 and Destroyer Squadron Two staffs will be embarked in the Ford, as will Carrier Air Wing Eight. Deploying with the group will be Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60); the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ramage (DDG 61), USS McFaul (DDG 74), and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116); the Legend-class national security cutter USCGC Hamilton (WMSL 753); the Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS Joshua Humphpries (T-AO 188), and the Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Robert E. Peary (T-AKE 5).

Units from eight allied and partner nations will operate with the CSG and include ships from Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. The CSG includes 17 ships and one submarine.

While deployed, the Ford CSG will conduct group steaming, air-defense exercises, maritime domain awareness, long-range maritime strike, distributed maritime operations, antisubmarine warfare exercises and naval integration, Dwyer said.

All eight squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Eight will be onboard for the deployment but some will not be at full strength in

terms of numbers of aircraft.

“It won’t be the full complement, but it will be nearly the entire air wing,” Dwyer said. “And that is not because of any lack of capacity aboard Ford, but only where the air wing is in the Global Force Management process. We’re still sizing the numbers, but it will be a fairly full air wing, but not the complete air wing.”

New Technology

The Ford, commissioned in 2017, is deploying with 43 new technologies, including the Electro-Magnetic Aircraft Launch System, and the Advanced Arresting Gear.

The Ford’s commanding officer, Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, said in a Sept. 29 interview that all systems have been tested and are ready to go, and some will go through further operational testing.

Lanzilotta, a native of Long Island, New York, is an E-2 Hawkeye naval flight officer. He said the Ford has “incredible network connectivity.”

Navy Fast-Tracks Contract for MQ-9 Reaper Advanced Network Pod

The MQ-9 Reaper provides Marines with a long-range intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability in support of expeditionary advanced based operations, littoral operations in contested environments, and maritime domain awareness. *U.S. MARINE CORPS*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The Navy recently awarded an $8.4 million dollar contract to multiple vendors for the Marine Corps' MQ-9 Reaper Airborne Network Extension Skytower II (STII), the Naval Air Systems said Oct. 3.

Industry partners Global Air Logistics and Training, Northrop Grumman and L-3Harris will perform work to develop the first phase of STII, a network pod that will add an additional capability to support the MQ-9 Reaper's operational missions.

The Multi-Mission Tactical Unmanned Air System program office (PMA-266) awarded the contract under an Other Transaction Agreement/Authority, a contract vehicle used by the government to streamline research and development and prototype

development.

“This OTA allowed the contracts team to tailor the scope of the project and narrow down vendor capabilities by releasing a Statement of Need early on,” said Michelle Dutko, PMA-266’s STII team lead. “The OTA also provided the opportunity for the team to develop the statement of work with vendor input therefore streamlining the normal processing time to contract award.”

After the first phase of research and development is complete, the Navy and Marine Corps plan to prototype demo on surrogate aircraft and then prototype the system on an MQ-9A aircraft, Dutko said.

STII is required to execute the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance concept of operations by providing tactically relevant operational communications and data sharing capabilities at the tactical edge. It supports interoperability with existing STI capabilities to include multiple waveforms.

The Airborne Network Extension will have provisions to complement a collection of onboard sensors and off-board systems, and facilitate the retransmission, cross-banding and translation of data across gateway-connected networks. It will also enhance battlespace awareness and information sharing capabilities amongst the integrated Naval and Joint Force, connecting disparate networks and enabling the execution of mission-critical information exchange requirements.

The MQ-9 Reaper provides Marines with a long-range ISR capability in support of maritime domain awareness and expeditionary advanced based operations in contested environments. MQ-9s are scheduled to deploy with this new system in 2026.